

Post 8/27/66
Bases of Foreign Policy

President Johnson has added some concise and valuable definitions to the objectives of American foreign policy. While the United States "has no mandate to interfere wherever government falls short of our specifications," he said at the University of Denver, it will have "the respect of the people of other countries only as they know what side we are on." In addition to citing the broader rules that foreign policy is an extension of domestic aspirations, that it seeks negotiation and opposes violence and that it recognizes the right to disagree, Mr. Johnson listed some specific applications worth repeating:

1. In the Communist countries the United States is on the side of those "who seek to enlarge the spectrum of discussion" as an encouragement to change.

2. In Latin America we are on the side of constitutional governments—and not on the side of "those who say that dictatorships are necessary for efficient economic development or as a bulwark against communism."

3. In Africa we are on the side of those who are working toward "full equality between the races" as well as of those who seek stable and orderly government.

4. In Vietnam the United States is on the side of fair and orderly elections that give "the widest possible expression to the will of the people"; this

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country will accept "what is freely and fairly expressed by that will."

Of course not all situations fit neatly into these definitions. There are hard decisions about individual cases and problems, as the President himself knows only too well, and dogmatic specifications can be impracticable. Occasionally, for example, a military regime may be more libertarian than what it replaces. Sometimes it may be to the interest of the United States not to take sides in a particular issue even though the various parties each seek such an endorsement. Sometimes, indeed, American performance may be dictated by immediate strategic concerns and may seem to fall short of our proclaimed ideals.

Nevertheless, nations are known by, and win international support in accordance with, their goals and principles. It is highly useful, for understanding at home as well as by the peoples of other countries, to have this thumbnail sketch of what the United States seeks to accomplish through its foreign policy.